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ABSTRACT

This study examined differences in final course grades for campus-based and distance education students in the Center for Psychological Studies at Nova Southeastern University (Florida). Data on 2,244 course grades for winter term 1997 were obtained from university records. It was found that students enrolled in courses offered through distance education received a similar frequency of successful grades (A, B, C, or Pass) relative to their campus-based counterparts. It was also found that in three courses in the master's program in mental health counseling (Human Development and Learning, Substance Abuse, and Case Conceptualization), students enrolled in courses offered through distance education received a similar frequency of successful grades relative to their campus-based counterparts. An appendix provides four sets of data tables. (MDM)

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ED 429 479

AN ANALYSIS OF FINAL GRADES FOR SELECTED COURSES IN THE CENTER FOR PSYCHOLOGICAL STUDIES: DIFFERENCES BETWEEN ON-CAMPUS STUDENTS AND OFF-CAMPUS STUDENTS

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Office of Research and Planning provided the first comprehensive analysis of grades at Nova Southeastern University in 1996. Because of the way data were organized, it was not possible at that time to report grades based on place of class instruction (on-campus and off-campus).

Since then, Research and Planning has conducted analyses of grades by faculty affiliation status (full-time faculty and part-time faculty) and by place of class instruction (on-campus courses and off-campus courses). These analyses focused on courses taught during Winter Term 1997, with breakouts provided for each academic center.

The purpose of this report is to build on these studies and to report on grades by place of class instruction for selected courses in the Center for Psychological Studies. Specifically, this report focused on three courses in the Master's Program in Mental Health Counseling, which is offered both on-campus and off-campus:

- PSY 0512 Human Development and Learning
- PSY 0612 Substance Abuse
- PSY 0675 Case Conceptualization

These courses were purposely selected by administrative staff in the Center for Psychological Studies to represent courses from the beginning, middle, and end of the program.

Following guidelines established by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools:

- All courses offered in either Broward County or Miami-Dade County were considered on-campus courses.
- All courses offered at other locations were considered off-campus courses.

This level of analysis should further support the University's many efforts to assess the comparability of campus-based courses to courses offered at distance education sites.

For all three courses, off-campus students were in parity with on-campus students in terms of the relative frequency of successful grades received. There were no instances where on-campus students received at a significant level ($p \leq .05$) a greater frequency of successful grades than off-campus students.

Using the frequency of successful grades as a unit of measure, this study provides a degree of evidence that off-campus students enjoy academic success that certainly meets the level of

academic success experienced by on-campus students. To gain a better sense of academic achievement between on-campus students and off-campus students, this study offered the recommendation that the Center for Psychological Studies should provide some type of common assessment (possibly a common final examination) in selected courses that are offered in both formats. Then, it would be possible to empirically determine achievement of on-campus students and off-campus students on an equivalent examination or other common assessment instrument.

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BACKGROUND

The Office of Research and Planning provided the first comprehensive analysis of grades at Nova Southeastern University in 1996 (*Grades at Nova Southeastern University: Fall Term 1993, Fall Term 1994, and Fall Term 1995*; 1996). A limitation of that report was that grades could only be reported by academic center and not by place of class instruction (on-campus and off-campus). Since then, Research and Planning has reported on grades by faculty affiliation status (*A Comparison of Final Grades Awarded by Full-Time Faculty and Part-Time Faculty by Academic Center for Winter Term 1997*; 1998) and by place of class attendance (*A Comparison of Final Grades Awarded in Campus-Based Courses and Courses Offered Through Distance Education for Winter Term 1997*; 1998).

The purpose of this report is to build on these studies and to report on grades by place of class instruction for selected courses in the Center for Psychological Studies. Specifically, this report focused on three courses in the Master's Program in Mental Health Counseling, which is offered both on-campus and off-campus:

- PSY 0512 Human Development and Learning
- PSY 0612 Substance Abuse
- PSY 0675 Case Conceptualization

Guidelines established by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools were used to provide an operational definition of on-campus instruction and off-campus instruction:

- All courses offered in either Broward County or Miami-Dade County were considered on-campus courses.

  During Winter Term 1997, 75.7 percent of all grades in the Center for Psychological Studies were awarded in on-campus classes.

- All courses offered at other locations were considered off-campus courses.

  During Winter Term 1997, 24.3 percent of all grades in the Center for Psychological Studies were awarded in off-campus classes.

METHODOLOGY

The methodology used for *Grades at Nova Southeastern University: Fall Term 1993, Fall Term 1994, and Fall Term 1995* (1996) was quite useful and the methodology for this report largely replicates the procedures used in that prior study:

1. The computing center provided the original extract file on November 11, 1997.

   This date provided an approximate four month interim from the end of Winter Term 1997 and the creation of the extract file, allowing sufficient time for adjustment to most *Incomplete* grades and the posting of any late grades.

2. The extract file was purposely prepared so that the five column cluster code for each course was identified, allowing for later discrimination between on-campus courses and off-campus courses.

3. Administrative staff in the Center for Psychological Studies selected three courses from the Master's Program in Mental Health Counseling, which is offered to both on-campus students and off-campus students. These courses were purposely selected to represent courses from the beginning, middle, and end of the program.

4. Grades were organized into two separate categories:

   - Successful grades (A, B, C, and Pass)
   - All other grades

The chi-square test was then used to determine if there were differences in the frequency of successful grades awarded to on-campus students and off-campus students.

RESULTS

Table 1 provides a degree of University-wide context to the frequency of successful grades and all other grades for on-campus students and off-campus students during Winter Term 1997. Table 2 focuses exclusively on the Center for Psychological Studies and the frequency of successful grades and all other grades for on-campus students and off-campus students during Winter Term 1997. For the entire center, there was no difference in the frequency of successful grades awarded between on-campus students and off-campus students.

Tables 3.A to 3.C specifically relate to the three courses selected for this study. For all

three courses selected for this study, off-campus students were in parity with on-campus students in terms of the relative frequency of successful grades received. There were no instances where on-campus students received, at a significant level ($p \leq .05$), a greater frequency of successful grades than off-campus students.

SUMMARY

The University is compelled by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools to demonstrate that "[ ] its distance learning programs are effective and comply with all applicable *Criteria*" (*Criteria* for Accreditation; 1998, p. 40). The Southern Association of Colleges and Schools has further compelled the University to "Provide documentation that all distance learning courses are comparable to the on-campus courses and that the goals for each off-campus site are clear and explicit and are assessed regularly" (personal communication from J. T. Rogers, July 2, 1998).

This report, in parity with findings identified in *A Comparison of Final Grades Awarded in Campus-Based Courses and Courses Offered Through Distance Education for Winter Term 1997* (1998), provides a degree of evidence that off-campus students enjoy academic success that certainly meets the level of academic success experienced by on-campus students. Using the frequency of successful grades as a unit of measure, the findings of this report provide ample evidence that "distance learning courses are comparable to the on-campus courses."

To gain a better sense of academic achievement between on-campus students and off-campus students, this study offered the recommendation that the Center for Psychological Studies should provide some type of standardized assessment (possibly a common final examination) in selected courses that are offered in both formats. Then, it would be possible to empirically determine achievement of on-campus students and off-campus students on an equivalent examination or other common assessment instrument.

REFERENCES

A Comparison of Final Grades Awarded by Full-Time Faculty and Part-Time Faculty by Academic Center for Winter Term 1997. (1998). Fort Lauderdale, Florida: Nova Southeastern University. Research and Planning Report 98-09.

A Comparison of Final Grades Awarded in Campus-Based Courses and Courses Offered Through Distance Education for Winter Term 1997. (1998). Fort Lauderdale, Florida: Nova Southeastern University. Research and Planning Report 96-10.

Grades at Nova Southeastern University: Fall Term 1993, Fall Term 1994, and Fall Term 1995. (1996). Fort Lauderdale, Florida: Nova Southeastern University. Research and Planning Report 96-19.

Criteria for Accreditation. (1998). Decatur, Georgia: Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges.

APPENDIX:

Tables 1 to 4

Table 1

Summary of Successful Grades (A, B, C, Pass) and All Other Grades by Place of Class Location and by Academic Center: Winter Term 1997

Academic Center	Successful Grades: A, B, C, Pass		All Other Grades		p	Results of Chi-Square Analysis
	Campus	Distance	Campus	Distance		
Farquhar Center for Undergraduate Studies	6,687	3,348	1,390	505	.001	Students enrolled in courses offered through distance education received a significantly greater frequency of successful grades than their campus-based counterparts.
Fischler Center for the Advancement of Education	4,906	2,421	605	164	.001	Students enrolled in courses offered through distance education received a significantly greater frequency of successful grades than their campus-based counterparts.
School of Business and Entrepreneurship	1,973	1,807	288	93	.001	Students enrolled in courses offered through distance education received a significantly greater frequency of successful grades than their campus-based counterparts.

Center for Psychological Studies . . .	1,609	499	90	46	.007	There is no difference in the frequency of successful grades awarded between students enrolled in courses offered through distance education and students who are campus-based.
All Four Academic Centers with Both Campus-Based Courses and Distance Education Courses	15,175	8,075	2,373	808	.001	Students enrolled in courses offered through distance education received a significantly greater frequency of successful grades than their campus-based counterparts.

Table 2

Summary of Winter Term 1997 Grades by Place of Class Location: Center for Psychological Studies

	Successful Grades												
	A		B		C		Pass		Subtotal		All Other Grades		Total
Faculty Status	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N
Campus-Based Instruction													
Broward County	1,120	69	336	21	18	1	68	4	1,542	95	88	5	1,630
Miami-Dade County	45	65	17	25	5	7	0	0	67	97	2	3	69
Subtotal	1,165	69	353	21	23	1	68	4	1,609	95	90	5	1,699
Distance Education													
Subtotal	359	66	131	24	9	2	0	0	499	92	46	8	545
TOTAL	1,524	68	484	22	32	1	68	3	2,108	94	136	6	2,244

Null Hypothesis: There is no statistically significant difference between campus-based courses and distance education courses regarding the frequency of successful grades and all other grades awarded ($p \leq .001$).

Finding: Chi-square = 7.16 and the Null Hypothesis is accepted ($p = .007$).

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Table 3.A

Summary of Winter Term 1997 Grades by Place of Class Location: PSY 0512 (Human Development and Learning)

	Successful Grades												
	A		B		C		Pass		Subtotal		All Other Grades		Total
Faculty Status	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N
Campus-Based Instruction													
Broward County	26	57	13	28	1	2	0	0	40	87	6	13	46
Miami-Dade County	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Subtotal	26	57	13	28	1	2	0	0	40	87	6	13	46
Distance Education													
Subtotal	20	44	12	27	1	2	0	0	33	73	12	27	45
TOTAL	46	51	25	27	2	2	0	0	73	80	18	20	91

Null Hypothesis: There is no statistically significant difference between on-campus course sections and off-campus course sections regarding the frequency of successful grades and all other grades awarded ($p \leq .05$).

Finding: Chi-square = 2.66 and the Null Hypothesis is accepted ($p = .103$).

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Table 3.B

Summary of Winter Term 1997 Grades by Place of Class Location: PSY 0612 (Substance Abuse)

	Successful Grades												
	A		B		C		Pass		Subtotal		All Other Grades		Total
Faculty Status	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N
Campus-Based Instruction													
Broward County	9	90	1	10	0	0	0	0	10	100	0	0	10
Miami-Dade County	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Subtotal	9	90	1	10	0	0	0	0	10	100	0	0	10
Distance Education													
Subtotal	16	89	2	11	0	0	0	0	18	100	0	0	18
TOTAL	25	89	3	11	0	0	0	0	28	100	0	0	28

Null Hypothesis: There is no statistically significant difference between on-campus course sections and off-campus course sections regarding the frequency of successful grades and all other grades awarded ($p \leq .05$).

Finding: Chi-square can not be computed since there were zero observations for "All Other Grades" for both off-campus students and on-campus students. Accordingly, an inferential test is unnecessary for this analysis. All on-campus students received an "A, B, C, or Pass" and all off-campus students also received an "A, B, C, or Pass."

Table 3.C

Summary of Winter Term 1997 Grades by Place of Class Location: PSY 0675 (Case Conceptualization)

	Successful Grades												
	A		B		C		Pass		Subtotal		All Other Grades		Total
Faculty Status	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N
Campus-Based Instruction													
Broward County	19	63	11	37	0	0	0	0	30	100	0	0	30
Miami-Dade County	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Subtotal	19	63	11	37	0	0	0	0	30	100	0	0	30
Distance Education													
Subtotal	39	61	21	33	0	0	0	0	60	94	4	6	64
TOTAL	58	62	32	34	0	0	0	0	90	96	4	4	94

Null Hypothesis: There is no statistically significant difference between on-campus course sections and off-campus course sections regarding the frequency of successful grades and all other grades awarded ($p \leq .05$).

Finding: Chi-square = 1.96 and the Null Hypothesis is accepted ($p = .162$).

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Table 4

Comparison of Successful Grades During Winter Term 1997 for Three Courses Offered On-Campus and Off-Campus

Course	Chi-square	p	Significant difference at $p \leq .05$	
PSY 0512	2.66	.103	No	Off-Campus = On-Campus
PSY 0612	n/a[1]	n/a	No	Off-Campus = On-Campus
PSY 0675	1.96	.162	No	Off-Campus = On-Campus

[1] Chi-square can not be computed since there were zero observations for "All Other Grades" for both off-campus students and on-campus students. Accordingly, an inferential test is unnecessary for this analysis. All on-campus students received an "A, B, C, or Pass" and all off-campus students also received an "A, B, C, or Pass."